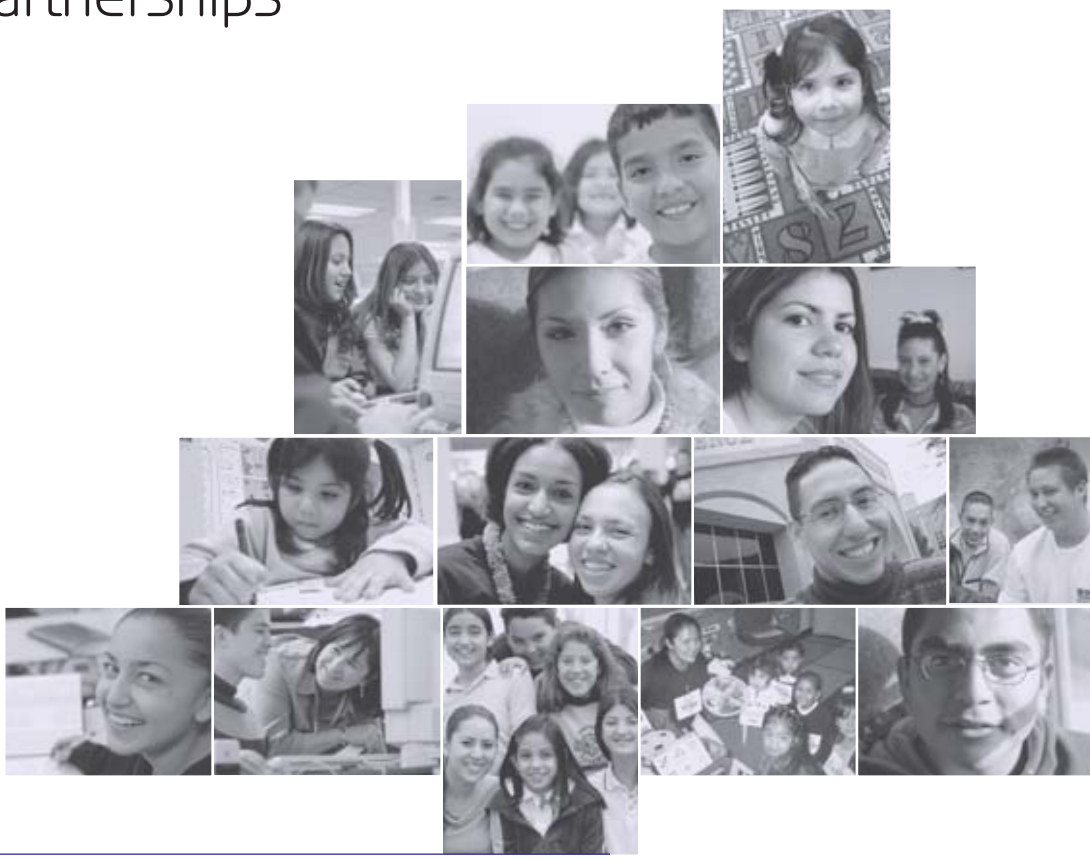
# ENLACE

## Connection: What Makes a Difference in the Education of Latino U.S. Students:

## Learning from the Experience of 13 ENLACE Partnerships



ENLACE

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

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# Preface

When the Kellogg Foundation began ENLACE in 1997, the need for this initiative was clear. At the time, the nation's 31 million Latinos represented the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population. Their ability to secure a good education would have major ramifications, not only for Latinos, but for American society and the global economy as well.

Today, the need for ENLACE is greater than ever. By 2004, (the latest statistics available) the number of Latinos in the United States had climbed to 40 million. Yet, as this publication reports, Latinos continue to lag behind in terms of academic achievement, college admission, and graduation rates.

Still, these problems are far from intractable. We can indeed analyze K-12 and higher education systems, strengthen the educational pathway, and increase opportunities for Latinos to enter and complete college. We have seen ENLACE grantees do just that in several communities. Their experiences and hard-earned lessons are chronicled in this publication.

The Kellogg Foundation places great emphasis on collaboration and the importance of shared effort at the community level. These principles have clearly been a driving force behind ENLACE. Much of what makes ENLACE work is the willingness of good neighbors to share information and resources, offer encouragement, and build strong relationships and policies that promote a culture of academic achievement.

The principles and practices of ENLACE hold great promise for improving the educational outcomes and graduation rates of Latino youth. At the same time, what ENLACE teaches us about the need for engaged parents, community members, and schools can help children of all backgrounds to succeed. We hope that you will join us in making the goals of ENLACE a reality for everyone.

Sterling K. Speirn
President and CEO
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

# Introduction to ENLACE

In 1997, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation created a national education initiative, ENLACE (pronounced en-LAH-say), ENgaging LAtino Communities for Education. Its goal is to increase access and success in higher education for Latino students and their families.

The $30 million investment in ENLACE by the Kellogg Foundation responds to a timely need to connect all students to the possibilities of higher education. While the economy demands an increasingly educated and skilled workforce, the response of our educational system to meet this demand has been, most would agree, disjointed. For example, school districts define high school graduation requirements, while, often unconnected, the postsecondary system defines its own standards for college entrance. Thus, the K-12 school system and the higher education systems remain fragmented.

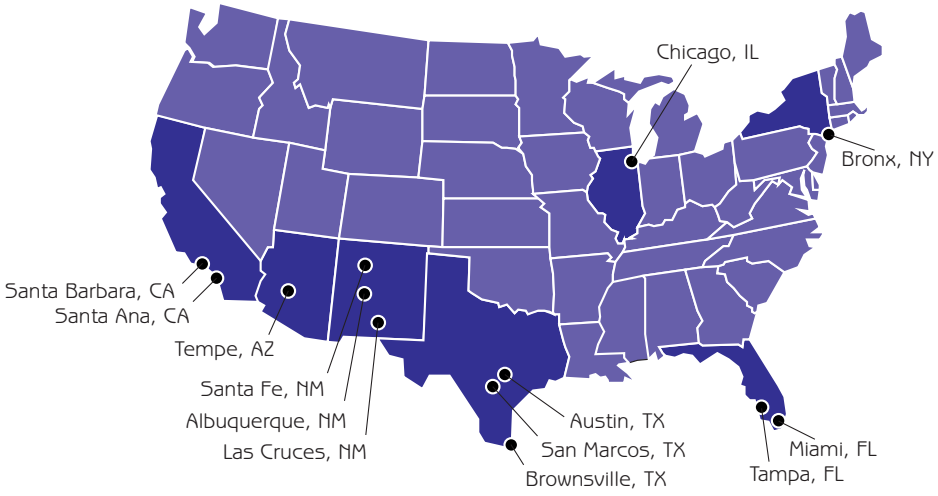
Latino and other minority students, as well as students who are the first in their families with the possibility of college, suffer disproportionately from these disconnects. As these students complete high school, many are unprepared for college, as seen by the high demand for remedial classes, and often, ineligible for college, yet not even aware of this until their senior year. The roots of this disparity run deep. In the very early grades, students are tracked into either college-preparatory or remedial tracks, making it difficult to catch up in time for college.

Despite these obstacles, research shows that the vast majority of students intend to go to college. ENLACE is a response to this disparity between Latino students' educational aspirations and their school career realities.

ENLACE has forged connections between systems and thereby improved students' education possibilities, with a focus on the Latino community. The Latino population in the United States increased 58 percent between 1990 and 2000 and is expected to comprise almost one-third of all U.S. youth by 2050. This rapid growth can be seen in states with longstanding Latino populations, such as Texas and California, but also in states such as Arkansas, Georgia, and Tennessee. While the 13 original ENLACE communities are in seven states with the most highly concentrated Latino populations in the country, the lessons and strategies have relevance across the country.

The ENLACE approach described in this document starts with partnerships as the vehicle for change: partnerships of education institutions with Latino students, parents, educators, and community leaders. Many of the strategies – implemented by new and existing educational partnerships formed in the 13 communities – were traditional: mentoring and tutoring programs, small learning communities, and parent outreach programs. However, what proved critical for ENLACE was moving beyond a discrete set of programs into an educational movement for change in those communities. Schools that had never worked with their community's university began reviewing shared graduation and admissions requirements. Community colleges connected with high schools to recruit Latino students and assist them on their path to a bachelor's degree. And Latino parents, many without strong English language skills or educational achievement themselves, took hold of an opportunity to shine, as advocates for their own children, and leaders for their community's children.

## The ENLACE Sites Map



# The ENLACE Sites

| State | Lead Institution | Examples of Key Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Arizona | Arizona State University, Tempe | Businesses sponsor a peer tutoring program in four high schools, as well as summer bridge programs to help students transition into college. |
| California | Santa Ana College, Santa Ana | Colleges and high schools create "higher education centers" in high schools to increase early awareness of college demands on students and families. Parents get engaged in education through *Padres Promotores de la Educación*. |
| | University of California, Santa Barbara | University students mentor middle-grades "scholars" and their families, while Oxnard and Ventura partners reach out through bilingual videos, culturally appropriate curriculum, and rural-based programs. |
| Florida | Florida International University, Miami | University students tutor youth in all schools. Increased literacy skills are offered to elementary students and parents. A new parent network focuses on leadership and advocacy. |
| | University of South Florida, Tampa | Targeting first-generation Latino students in three high school/ middle school clusters, activities build early college awareness and enrichment through museum and community partners. |
| Illinois | Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago | The university signed dual admissions agreements with five community colleges. Postsecondary Latino staff and community members are ENLACE Fellows, becoming role models and developing leadership skills. |
| New Mexico | New Mexico State University, Las Cruces | To increase literacy, lessons incorporate Latino literature and authors. A parent university aims to provide a forum to unite parents, providing them with leadership and advocacy skills. |
| | Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe | Leadership development activities involve secondary and postsecondary students across the geographically dispersed partnership. |
| | University of New Mexico, Albuquerque | Family resource centers seek greater community involvement in education. Peer mentoring and greater university counseling target increased student retention. Programs also promote new and current Latino teachers. |
| | *Together, these three partnerships have formed a separate statewide partnership:* ENLACE in New Mexico Collaborative | The collaborative includes statewide strategies in policy, evaluation, communications and in student leadership development. |
| New York | Lehman College, City University of New York, Bronx | Targeting middle–grades students and parents, activities focus on cultural enrichment and increased parent leadership. |
| Texas | Texas St. Edward's University, Austin | Along with K–12 public schools, the alliance includes a community college, businesses, and Austin Interfaith partners that are strengthening community and parental involvement. |
| | Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos | Postsecondary partners hire coordinators, or promotores, to support student preparation for college and future careers, and align high school graduation standards with college admission requirements. |
| | University of Texas-Brownsville/Texas Southmost College, Brownsville | The alliance targets improved math and science education. Students who take academically rigorous courses are more likely to go on to college. |

# Impact of ENLACE

While the focus of ENLACE was on access to and success in higher education, the strategies and impacts spanned the P-20 educational pathway. Because the seeds of college-going are planted early, changing education conditions in elementary school, middle school, high school, and in the community were a critical impact of ENLACE.

Eventually, the framework that emerged was for each ENLACE partnership to directly change the educational achievement and aspirations of current Latino students and families, while simultaneously working on the conditions of education for all students in the future. As Sal Torres, a community college partner from the ENLACE Hillsborough partnership expressed, "*not only were we trying to help students, we were also trying to change the environment for students*." The impact of ENLACE can be described as running along these two parallel tracks.

## Impact on the Educational Achievement and Aspirations of Current Latino Students

Through the implementation phase, the 13 ENLACE partnerships reached more than *116,000 students, parents, and community members annually with direct services or participation in outreach activities, college fairs, and celebrations. Specifically, 80,455 students and 30,730 parents have been served by ENLACE since its inception.* The programs and services took the form of academic tutoring and mentoring, college information nights, college advising centers, and student leadership programs. These student- and family-centered programs were combined with changes in policy to have an impact on participating students.

Signature impacts on Latino students and families from the range of ENLACE sites include:

| | |
|---|---|
| Kindergarten and Elementary School | Increase in Latino students passing standardized reading and math tests (as a result of academic tutoring programs and curricular policy changes) |
| | Increased Latino parent participation in PTAs and in the school (school-based Latino parent groups) |
| Middle School | Increase in Latino students taking and succeeding in college-preparatory math classes (math tutoring, teacher preparation, and summer bridge classes) |
| | Greater knowledge by Latino students and parents of college-going requirements and financial aid (school-based course about college-going and college visits) |

| | |
|---|---|
| High School | Increase in Latino students taking a college-preparatory curriculum and Advanced Placement classes (peer learning programs, study skills programs, and academic tutoring) |
| | Increased expectations for college-going by Latino students (college advisement centers and college student mentoring programs) |
| | Greater involvement of Latino parents in the educational process (Latino parent leadership groups and school-based family centers) |
| Community College and University | Increase in Latino student transfers from community college to university (articulation agreements and college transfer programs) |
| | Reduction in first-year drop-out rates for Latino college students (freshmen peer learning groups) |

## Impact on the Educational Systems

A critical but often overlooked question for describing impact is: Have the conditions of education been altered to improve the outlook for future generations of students?

Data from the ENLACE sites show incremental changes in the educational systems that serve Latino students in those 13 communities. The direct service strategies serve as the foundation for systemic change, as effective programs are scaled up and embedded in schools and colleges. The partnerships themselves can result in systemic change as local schools, colleges, and universities work together in new ways. And connecting disenfranchised Latino communities into the educational process can lift the work from being a series of disconnected projects into an educational movement. The systemic changes required a commitment on the part of the institutions to change their staffing, policies, and funding to better serve students.

Signature systemic changes across the ENLACE partnerships included:

- Adoption of pre-algebra requirements for all middle school students in a school district
- Incorporation of a college-going course into middle school curricula
- Establishment of family centers, with dedicated space and funding, in middle and high schools
- Establishment of college advisement centers in high schools

- Creation of shared recruitment/college counseling staff positions between high school and local community college
- Institutionalization of SAT/ACT preparation courses in high school
- Institutionalization of transfer programs from community college to university
- Establishment of freshman seminar program for all students to teach study skills and help with course selection

The two layers of impact, on students and on the system, go hand-in-hand. Changes can be made to the system, but if they do not translate into impact on students, they are only symbolic. Similarly, if the strategies do not result in changes to the system, the impacts will help those participating students only as long as external funding lasts. Creating the ENLACE partnerships to outlive fleeting external funds required building relationships and laying down community roots to tackle educational disparities for the long term. As Sara Lundquist, the site director from the Santa Ana ENLACE partnership reflected, *"What you're really doing is making a difference immediately for students, while building your capacity to work together for the long term."*

# The ENLACE Model for Latino Educational Access and Success


Partnerships as the vehicle for change

**The core vision:** The heart of the ENLACE model is a vision of access and success for Latino students in higher education. The vision is deeply rooted in the local educational context and in the educational aspirations and dreams of the local Latino community. This meant finding answers to the core questions: How are Latino students faring educationally? At what points along the educational pathway are schools not working for Latino students and why? What are the barriers to educational success? What needs to change to reduce those barriers? What are we willing and able to commit to change? A clearly defined vision is the starting point.

**Partnerships as the vehicle for change:** The educational partnerships that guide ENLACE are rooted in two key places: 1) the institutions in the local P-20 educational pathway; and 2) the local community of parents, students, educators, and community leaders. For the ENLACE model to move beyond a disjointed series of projects that would disappear once funding ended, both groups are needed. The schools, community colleges, and universities that make up the "feeder pattern" of the local P-20 educational pathway need to come together around their shared students. Connecting the local Latino community to the educational experience of their children is fundamental for creating a movement that outlasts any one external funder.

## The Three Core Elements

The strategies chosen by the partnerships can be divided into three core elements: 1) strategies that directly serve students; 2) strategies that engage parents and the larger community; and 3) strategies that change the state and institutional policies that govern how students experience education.

A myopic focus on academics is not enough to change, for example, the numbers of Latino students who can pass the language arts requirements necessary for college. The various pieces of that puzzle include:

- Rigorous and targeted programs that enhance Latino students' writing skills at key points in their education,
- Parental strategies that build their own English-as-a-Second-Language skills, and community mobilization efforts that promote reading and Latino literature,
- Policy changes to channel resources to provide additional teacher training on effectively teaching writing skills to bilingual students, and to bring English high school teachers together with local English college professors to align ideas about students' writing skills when they graduate from high school and the writing expectations to succeed in college.

The resulting incremental progress is then monitored closely, with successes celebrated along the way. By paying attention to all three areas (direct student programs; parent and community engagement strategies; changing policies), ENLACE partnerships avoided the classic quick fix of creating expensive programs to boost student achievement without considering parental and community involvement in schools, nor altering the institutions that provide these programs. Investing in these multi-pronged strategies created the student-level and systems-level impacts of ENLACE.

## A Note on Getting Started

The broad and ambitious nature of the ENLACE vision begs the question of where to begin. The scope of change needed to tackle disparity in education can prompt the impulse to do a little bit of everything. As Sara Lundquist described, *"I think one of the mistakes people make is that they diffuse very limited and precious resources. People work on five*

*problems at once, and they never have a victory because they spread themselves too thin. If you can show real change in one arena, that is much more catalytic to scaling up change than doing a little bit in math, a little bit in literacy, a little bit in something else, where you never really get results."* Getting incremental results, even if they are small victories in a small arena, sustains the partnership to keep striving for larger results.

**The following are some key principles for getting started with this work:**

**Create a broad vision for change, but pick a focus to start.** The broad vision comes from understanding all areas along the college pathway that need to change. Then, however, the partnership needs to find places to start. This means finding an area where progress can be made that is generally well understood – by educators, community leaders, and politicians – as being a critical education issue for the community. Drilling down from the broad vision of, for example, reducing disparities in academic achievement, into specifics of getting all students to succeed in 7th grade pre-algebra math, provides a place to start. Then, framing progress in math as part of a community movement to prepare all students for college links it back to the broader vision for change.

**Map out the strategy for change.** The strategies that set young scholars on a path to college in the early grades need to be connected conceptually, and eventually through impact, to the ultimate vision of admission and success in college. Early academic preparation, early college awareness, and early community support are all part of the chain of impact. Similarly, the parent, family, and community strategies required to support a student's educational aspirations need to connect to college-going. Some conceptual models include: a "blueprint" for change that lays out the curricular changes, professional development strategies, student support, and parent programs all along the local P-20 pathway; a "gap analysis" that identifies where the key barriers and issues lie; and a "logic model" that visually expresses the theory of the incremental changes that would support college-going. These tools can help communities think about the building blocks for college success, as well as evaluate incremental progress.

**Push ahead in the absence of perfect consensus about the issues, perfect partners, or perfect strategies.** Carefully researching the issues and bringing together key partners is important. Equally important is not getting stuck at that stage. There are always more data to collect or other partners to bring on board. Incremental progress along the way can signal that change is possible, and can provide momentum for sustaining the work.

# The Vehicle for Change: Educational Partnerships

Our school system – from preschool to graduate school – should connect to serve a community's students. This seems like common sense, but it's easy to forget within the fragmented systems of P-12 on one side and higher education on the other, with parents and community left on the sidelines. The results can be that local high school graduation standards don't align with college admission standards, or that grade school students never set foot on a university campus. For Latino students who are first in their family to attend college, the disconnected educational pathway can mirror their own disconnection from the educational system.

The theory behind ENLACE is that through collaboration, communities can change their educational future. Through partnerships, these disconnects can be bridged to ensure all students access to and success in college.

## Who Made up the ENLACE Partnerships?

The core leadership of the educational partnership was made up of the local pathway of schools and colleges that serve a community's students, from preschool through higher education.

1. **The P(or K)-12 school** system was generally represented by school district leadership, including school board members, curriculum developers, and other district administrators. Schools along the feeder pathway serving most of the community's Latino students, with willingness to engage in this work, provided the foundation for direct service strategies with students.

2. **Community college** partners were generally those attended by the local high school graduates. Their role as the first higher educational experience for many Latino students is critical.

3. **The university** partners (who led most of the ENLACE partnerships) were generally the state-run higher education institutions, which were often the most likely higher education destination for local students.

These three educational partners made commitments to collaboratively address issues of Latino educational achievement. For some, the impetus was to increase enrollment or to get more well-qualified students into their college or university. They understood that, in order to get well-qualified students, they needed to help their local students prepare.

Moving beyond blame about why local students were not succeeding required deeper understanding across the institutional boundaries. The institutional partners tapped into leaders at all levels to create relationships across these boundaries. At one level, ENLACE created relationships between educational leaders (e.g., teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, principals, and faculty) with a mandate to serve students. Also important was connecting to high-level decision makers in these institutions. Higher education administrators, such as vice presidents, deans of admissions, school district administrators, and school board members, took an active role in the partnership. These leaders are well-positioned to push for changes in how the system works.

The other critical partners were from the community – the primary stakeholders in having an effective and equitable educational system.

4. **Community** partners included a variety of agencies that address Latino issues, such as community-based organizations that directly serve Latinos, and, in some places, businesses and religious organizations that acted as community leaders. These groups moved in and out of the partnership based on the local ENLACE goals. Herminio Martinez, the site director from the Bronx Educational Alliance (BEA) ENLACE partnership, described the ideal as being where, "*the vision determines who you want present at the table.*"

5. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, **Latino parents and students** were core partners. Sometimes they were represented through a community-based organization, like a family services agency, and sometimes through individual parents and student leaders. Formally and informally, these key stakeholders brought an urgency to the effort that was rooted in the real-life situations faced by students and their families.

Core Element 1

ENLACE

# Provide Personalized Academic and Social Support for Students Across the Educational Pathway

*"The struggle for most Latino students is that they just get passed on through the school system. They really don't get educated; they don't get prepared for college whatsoever. It's not because they don't want to, but because they've never been exposed to the idea of going to college, or prepared, or given the right tools, advice, mentoring, or leadership, in terms of, 'This is what you have to do before you get there.'"* – reflections of a Latino student in Northern New Mexico.

How can a community create a different experience for their Latino students – one in which students are not just "passed on through," but given the preparation, tools, advice, mentorship, and leadership to succeed? ENLACE partnerships implemented a menu of strategies and programs across the P-20 pathway to change educational outcomes for Latino students. The following describes four key arenas for this work, and successful strategies within each arena.

## Four Key Arenas of Work with Latino Students

### *(1) Catch struggling Latino students early to get them on a college preparatory track.*

Research shows that the rigor of high school courses is the most powerful predictor of academic achievement, high school graduation, and college enrollment. But early on, well before high school, Latino students fall behind. Nationally, in 2002, only 14 percent of 4th grade Latino children reached proficiency in reading, and in 2004, only nine percent of Latino 4th graders were proficient in math. Moreover, minority students are disproportionately represented in a pathway of less rigorous courses.

Based on their own local analyses, ENLACE partners sought to boost academic performance in the early grades, particularly in the "gateway" courses of math, science, and language arts. Early academic preparation was coupled with opportunities for social support. ENLACE schools also planted the seeds for college-going by exposing young students to university life and early career planning.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Pair young Latino students with mentors and tutors.** Local college students from similar backgrounds can provide academic and life role models to the younger elementary and middle school Latino students.

**Create small learning communities for middle and high school students.** Peer learning groups that meet during or after school or a Latino academic student club provide students with personal academic instruction and a sense of belonging. Attending high school Advanced Placement classes or college preparation classes as a group builds Latino students' confidence and can change the expectations of who belongs in higher level courses.

**Institute an "Understanding College" course for elementary and middle school students.** Students receive material tailored for them, as well as their families, about required courses and tests, and financial steps to ensure they can attend college.

## *(2) Create college-going tools and guidance that reach Latino students, as well as their families.*

All students need a chance to succeed in a rigorous high school curriculum. But that's just one piece of what they need if they are going to make it to college. Research shows that even the best-prepared minority students are not being admitted or enrolling in college at the same rates as white students. Latino students who are the first in their families to graduate from high school and go on to college are navigating the system without a road map. Often, Latino parents are learning together with their children.

ENLACE partnerships crafted new ways to share timely and relevant information with Latino students unfamiliar with the U.S. college system. Programs reached students and families in accessible places (the local high school) and in accessible ways (using other students and parents who speak their language and understand their cultural concerns). In this way, ENLACE programs conveyed not only the possibility of college for all students, but also assisted them with the practical steps to get into college.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Create college advising centers in high schools.** Staffed by guidance counselors and college-age mentors, these centers provide resources and personalized guidance to students and families. They demystify financial aid requirements, admissions policies, and college entrance exams. Developing the centers through a partnership between the local community college/university and high schools, with shared center staff, enhances the relevance and timeliness of the advice.

**Host "College Nights" tailored to immigrant and minority students and their families.** Effective programs include materials in Spanish and English, bilingual speakers, and opportunities for parents to speak to other Latino parents with children in college. Asking Latino students beforehand what they would like their parents to know about college ensures that the information touches on key fears and concerns.

**Train Latino college students to mentor Latino high school students in the college application process.** Equipped with the proper training about financial aid policies, scholarships, curricular requirements, and admissions tests, mentors provide both information and inspiration. Work through relationships with local high schools, community colleges, or universities to provide course credit or internships to students who act as mentors.

## *(3) Support Latino college students – tomorrow's leaders and today's role models.*

Latinos are the fastest growing college enrollment group in the United States. However, they are also most likely to leave college without attaining a degree. By age 26, only 18 percent of Latino high school graduates attained a bachelor's degree, compared to 38 percent of white graduates. Admission into college for Latino students is only the first step; success in college requires other supports. The financial burdens of college and the cultural dislocation are some of the barriers that Latino students face while often juggling full- or part-time jobs and family responsibilities.

ENLACE designed creative ways to stem this lost potential and provide Latino college students with culturally relevant support. Sites also recognized the potential of current Latino college students as mentors and role models to middle and high school students. This led universities and community colleges to tap into the leadership potential of their Latino students.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Create fellowship and internship programs for Latino undergraduate and graduate students.** Providing professional placements for Latino college students in businesses, nonprofit organizations, and schools serves two purposes: supporting Latino student success in higher education; and building the next generation of Latino professionals. As an example, Latino college students in the educational administration field are placed in local educational institutions where they have the opportunity to be hired in the future.

**Provide scholarships and other financial aid to Latino student teachers and other future Latino professionals**. Recognizing the disproportionate economic burden for first-generation college students translates into a good investment for both the student and the community.

**Institute Latino college freshmen peer learning communities.** These communities impart needed skills and academic supports for first-generation college students. A for-credit course for freshman college students addresses study skills, course requirements, balancing social and academic life, and financial management.

## *(4) Bridge the transitions across the educational pathway for Latino students.*

The transition between educational institutions can be challenging for all students. A community's elementary, middle, and high schools are often disconnected from each other, with differing policies, rules, and norms. Given that public schools and higher education institutions are governed by separate systems, the lack of alignment between P-12 and community college and university becomes even more pronounced. More than half of Latino students in higher education begin at a nearby community college, but most do not transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution. The ENLACE partnerships built relationships between staff at the various educational institutions that serve the same students at different points in their educational career.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Sponsor incoming student orientations for middle school students going into high school.** Schools welcome Latino students and their families into the new school environment. Introductions to new teachers, information about the new school in their own language, and supportive parent groups help integrate students and parents.

**Host "summer bridge" programs for high school students getting ready to enter college.** A rigorous summer program before freshman year motivates and sets high expectations for all. Programs at the local college or university for high school juniors or seniors provide students a personalized environment in which to first experience university life and get a head start on college courses.

**Create transfer programs between the community colleges and local university.** Successful transfer programs include individual counseling to help students navigate the paperwork for both financial and academic requirements. This bridges the gap for students wanting to transfer from the two-year community college to a baccalaureate-granting university.

**Gather educators from different schools to review academic requirements.** "Matchmaking" between high school and college administrators, school district curriculum developers and university admissions officers, and middle school and high school teachers connects people across institutions around shared work. This helps align expectations between schools, and builds relationships between individuals. As an example, high school English teachers and college professors teaching freshman English can review writing samples from local students together. This allows the high school teachers to understand the expectations of their students when they go to college, and gives the college professors an idea about the writing level of their incoming class.

## Take Note: Good Principles for Serving Latino Students

The strategies noted in this section addressed Latino students' needs all along the educational pathway. The following are principles that guided the work.

**Create personal connections with students to boost their achievement.** Over and over, ENLACE partners attribute the impact of the strategies to their personal connection with students. This connection was made by understanding each student's academic challenges, family situation, undiscovered talents, and aspirations. ENLACE programs also tapped into community assets. The one guidance counselor or one teacher was no longer the only advocate for students. College students, other parents, and community leaders became part of a network to support the community's young scholars' advancement through college.

**Place teaching and learning within a cultural context.** ENLACE partnerships learned the importance of bringing Latino students' personal context into the classroom. Education and learning were connected to their cultural roots. For some sites, this meant embedding Latino history, writings, and accomplishments into programs. For others, it was about implementing teaching and learning strategies that addressed Latino identity. The perception of adults who work with Latino students also made a difference. ENLACE sites learned to foster greater understanding by both placing Latino advocates within the system, and by familiarizing other adults with Latino culture.

**Leverage the power of peers.** ENLACE partnerships found it was nearly impossible to create a college-going culture without also creating a peer environment that supports high expectations. So, sites linked Latino students to each other. From summer programs to student clubs, social support at the middle and high school levels for high achievement gave these youth a way to counteract negative peer influences. The additional benefit is that high-achieving, college-eligible friends help to soften parental fears, particularly those of immigrant parents who have never gone to college. Even at the university level, ENLACE partnerships found peer support critical to helping Latino students stay in college.

**Provide role models, both Latino youth and adults.** First generation Latino students with the potential for college may not have anyone in their immediate lives who has gone to college. So, while they may aspire to a good education, many only expect to go through high school. Role models break that cycle, demonstrating through their own life experience what these students can become. ENLACE partnerships brought role models into classrooms and into students' lives. Latino scientists, astronauts, doctors, business and civic leaders, or simply older Latino college students, provided inspiration.

**Raise expectations for and about Latino students.** Latino students can get trapped in a cycle of low expectations which lead to low achievement. Everything in their educational lives may send the message that they are not expected to succeed: placement in remedial classes, no discussions about college, little parental involvement at school. Breaking this cycle requires raising the achievement bar for students and then helping them reach it. One concern is that in raising standards, low-income minority students who are already doing poorly in school are being set up to fail. In fact, research shows that when students are challenged with more difficult classes, they actually do better. The extra support, small learning communities, and personal advocacy for Latino students all help them meet these higher expectations.

Core Element


# Engage Parents, Families, and Communities

*"One girl's father stood up in his church and told everybody his daughter went to Harvard. You know, these kids all have sisters, brothers, extended family. This changes everybody in a community when something like this happens .... You're going to have families now say, I've got a younger kid, he's coming into high school. I want my kid to know about Carnegie Mellon."* Naomi Barber, from the Bronx Educational Alliance (BEA) ENLACE partnership.

Educational institutions alone cannot make all the difference. Creating a new reality for Latino students requires partnership with families and the broader community to signal to students that their educational achievement matters to everyone. As Ruth Hunter, from the Brownsville ENLACE partnership described, "*One thing we learned is that no matter how many things we want to change, if the community doesn't buy into it, the changes are not going to happen – even if they would benefit everybody! If a community decides they want to try something like this, they would need to make sure they are not the lone wolf crying, because the lone wolf can't do it. There needs to be consistent support from a broad base of the community.*"

The traditional ways educational institutions partner with parents are not working for many communities. Latino parents may not connect well with formal parent-teacher associations, periodic parent-teacher meetings, parental involvement in school fundraisers, and mailing information packets home. There are assumptions about language, culture, and economic norms embedded in these strategies that simply do not hold true for many Latino parents.

Latino parents may be juggling more than one job, and may have difficulty attending school events and making meaningful connections with teachers. Fear is often a factor, as many parents lack schooling themselves and worry about talking with teachers in a language that is not their own. Many Latino parents come from cultures where schools and teachers are entrusted with nearly every facet of a child's social and educational development. And, research shows that Latino parents want to be involved in their child's school life, which rejects the myth that low-income and immigrant parents don't value education.

Knowing all this, ENLACE partnerships were given great flexibility to try new ways of connecting Latino communities with their schools. Through listening to the needs of Latino parents, sites exposed the barriers to getting parents more involved, and then created ways around those barriers. They tapped into the assets the Latino families brought: values of family, hard work, and community.

To give a sense of scope, over the course of one year, ENLACE partnerships implemented 52 parent/family programs, serving more than 30,000 parents in 13 communities. The following describes four key arenas for this work, and successful strategies within each arena.

## Four Key Arenas of Work with Parents, Families and Communities

### *(1) Reach Latino families, starting in the early grades, with information about getting a college education.*

Helping their children prepare for college can be unfamiliar territory for many parents, particularly for students who are the first in their families to attend college. Applications, admissions tests, financial aid, and course requirements are all new experiences. School systems need to recognize that each family comes to this process with a different base of information and experiences.

### Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Teach parents about college-going so they can share information with other parents.** Training curricula for Latino parent leaders includes: How much does college actually cost? What is the ACT/SAT? What high school courses are required for college? Parents, armed with accurate information, share their findings with neighbors and friends door-to-door, or through churches, radio programs, community centers, or parent nights. The open dialogue, often in a home setting, demystifies the process.

**Host orientations for the families of college-going students.** Latino students often start at the local community college, live with family members, and work to support their family. These students, in turn,

need their families' support to succeed in college. Including families in college orientations, welcoming ceremonies, and college counseling sessions brings them on board as advocates.

**Take parents and families on college visits.** Starting in elementary school, including Latino parents on college campus visits builds support for college-going early and makes the prospect less foreign. Recruiting Latino parents requires understanding the language and economic norms of the community.

**Ask students what their parents need to know to support college aspirations.** With input from students, high school principals, teachers, and counselors can better address the real concerns of Latino parents.

**Use radio and television to reach parents with college preparatory information.** Radio call-in shows about college on the local Spanish-language station are a powerful means of communicating with Latino communities. Spanish-language public service announcements in the form of "telenovelas" dramatize critical issues and reach a broader audience.

### *(2) Engage Latino parents as education advocates for their community's students.*

Building on cultural values of community and extended family, Latino parents have the potential to act as powerful advocates for their community's children. Schools, community organizations, and higher education institutions can empower Latino parents to fill that role by providing educational materials, data about the local educational situation, and in-kind and financial support for schools.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Create high school-based family centers.** The family centers can be staffed by parent volunteers, with the support of schools. Both students and other parents use the centers as the place to get guidance about course requirements, work with teachers, or learn how to speak with the principal. Parent volunteers provide hands-on, personal advocacy to struggling students.

**Sponsor Latino "Parent Information Nights" to empower parents with knowledge about how the school system works and how well it is doing.** Latino parents, with their first-hand experience, and given sound data and community support, can be effective and powerful advocates in front of school boards and other policymakers.

## *(3) Address the educational needs of Latino parents.*

Parents who have not experienced formal educational success themselves can feel intimidated about supporting their own children's education. Helping with homework, talking with teachers, and selecting courses can be challenging, particularly in an unfamiliar language and system. ENLACE sites found that supporting parents' educational and other needs would support their children's aspirations, as well.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Create intergenerational academic programs for parents and students.** While Latino students get intensive tutoring, their parents are also given instruction. Topics include: interpreting your child's report card, role-playing a teacher-parent conference, and writing notes to your child's teacher. Other topics central to their own lives are also included, such as filling out an employment application, comparison shopping for food, and maintaining a good credit rating.

**Offer a course for Latino parents on parenting, educational leadership, or advocacy at a community college.** A certificate or continuing education credit course at the local college serves two needs: reaching Latino parents with information and tools they can share with others; and fulfilling the hopes of many Latino parents for their own continued education.

## *(4) Bring the Latino community together around education.*

The educational reform efforts in the ENLACE sites tapped into the passion of the Latino community to shape its own educational future. ENLACE partners worked through nonprofit organizations, churches, businesses, and local media to reach out to the Latino community. Schools or colleges/universities can work with community partners that already have networks in the Latino community, but may not have education as their primary issue.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Sponsor community educational events.** Community-wide events such as community walks, educational fairs, and book drives signal support for educational achievement.

**Organize neighborhood-based advocacy on education issues that matter to parents.** Informing community leaders and networks about the educational situation of Latino students builds a base of effective advocates for change. These leaders work with neighborhood parents to surface their experience with local schools. Parents and community leaders then present these experiences to school board members or in community forums to powerfully supplement institutional data.

**Recruit community leaders, and Latino parent and student leaders on to boards and committees.** Creating space for community perspectives on boards and committees brings a different level of urgency and reality to the work.

## Take Note: Good Principles for Involving Parents, Families, and Communities

The approaches just described required both institutional leaders and community members to reach out to others in new ways. Breaking down the barriers to communication required investing in these community-rooted strategies. The following are key principles that guided the work:

**Catch parents (not just students) early.** It only gets harder as students get older. In elementary and middle schools, ENLACE partners built the skills and confidence of Latino parents to be in schools and talk to teachers.

**Build on the Latino community's cultural norm of caring and family involvement.** Effective programs reflect the environment and values of the community. The ENLACE schools created a welcoming space and opportunity for extended Latino families. Language was important, as was food. At the college level, Latino student success required bringing the whole family into the college-going experience.

**Like every profession, peer-to-peer and word-of-mouth really works: Parents motivate other parents.** ENLACE partnerships learned that Latino parents could reach other parents in a way that administration often could not. The effective programs found and nurtured parent leaders and empowered their outreach in the community.

**Acknowledge that each student's family has a different base of knowledge and experience with schooling.** ENLACE partners learned to honor the differing experiences of parents and what may have been their own negative experiences with school, either in their country of birth or in the United States.

**Meet parents' basic needs, so they can then focus on educational needs.** While it may seem beyond the purview of education, ENLACE partners listened to the needs of the parents and learned to incorporate issues like financial planning, home ownership, and employment into programs that addressed their children's education.

**Recognize parental accomplishments.** At some ENLACE sites, Latino parents felt they could not legitimately help their children in school since they had not succeeded in school themselves. Breaking this cycle meant honoring the educational dreams of parents, as well as the students.

Core Element 3

# Changing Policy for Impact

Policies, within the educational context, are the rules that shape how students are served by schools. Moving institutions to change their policies is challenging work. There is not just one system serving students, but many. Preschools feed into K-12 systems (often distinct elementary, middle and high schools) which then feed into both community colleges and universities. Each system has its own history, rules, strengths, and failings; they are governed by local, state and national policies. These institutions can be massive bureaucracies, where the weight of history and inertia of size makes change happen slowly.

With regard to policy change, ENLACE successes came from making connections between disconnected institutions and problem-solving together. The solutions are almost always rooted in common sense. Through connection, institutions avoid becoming insular and isolated. Through connection, schools find solutions that better serve students, while still serving their institutions' missions.

The ENLACE sites learned, through trial and error, how to change policies to better serve Latino students. ENLACE partners exposed outdated admissions policies, curricular tracking of students, and barriers to transferring. The ENLACE partnerships then took the effective strategies for supporting Latino students and scaled them up through policy change. In this way, they could both impact more students and sustain the work begun through ENLACE. The following describes four key content arenas for policy change, and successful strategies within each arena:

## Four Key Policy Arenas for Latino Student Access and Success in College

### *(1) Get ALL students on a college-prep curriculum track from preschool through high school.*

Making the college preparatory curriculum the default for all students brings the U.S. educational system into step with modern economic realities. While direct service strategies for getting Latino students into college-prep classes help today's students, changing curriculum policies at an institutional and state level supports future generations of students.

Data shows that minority students are overrepresented in less rigorous curricular tracks. In fact, only 53 percent of Latino students graduate from high school with the course requirements to enter a four-year institution. The seeds for that inequality start early: when middle schools do not offer certain "gateway" courses (such as pre-algebra) or only offer them to "advanced students," the rest of the student body will not be prepared for college. It sets students up for failure by the time they reach high school and the students and their families are not even aware of it.

Understanding the inequities was a first step in working with partners to change policies. ENLACE partnerships studied their local situation, asking:

- What are the "gateway" courses for college admissions locally? Who is not getting those courses in high school? Why?
- Are there Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered in high schools? Who is not taking them? Why?
- How many local students have to take remedial coursework in college? Why?

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Investigate gaps between high school graduation requirements and higher education admissions requirements, and discuss them with the larger community.** Students and their parents often do not realize that a high school diploma does not automatically provide them the foundation for college admission.

**Test out rigorous college-preparatory courses.** Curriculum policy change requires many partners and a long-term strategy. Some begin by pilot-testing the adoption of a policy that requires all students to take a "gateway to college" course, such as pre-algebra in middle school. Then, to meet those raised expectations, students need tutoring and teachers need professional development. Carefully tracking how many and which students pass the course, and then adding needed supports, encourages that the policy does not exacerbate existing inequalities.

**Build upon local curricular reform movements.** States are at different levels of readiness to adopt a default college-preparatory curriculum. Interim progress can be made by connecting to local educational reform movements, such as an initiative to boost science education, which requires a rigorous science curriculum in middle school and professional development for pre-service science teachers at the university. Work in a specific academic area acts as a gateway to eventually adopting a full college preparatory curriculum for all students.

**Offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses and support all students to have equal access.** College-bound students need both the accelerated content and skill-building offered in AP courses. Expose inequities in access to and success in these rigorous courses, and provide support for Latino students to succeed. As more students demand the courses, more AP courses are offered.

## *(2) Bridge the gaps on the P-20 educational pathway.*

The different educational systems responsible for students at various points in their school careers are each governed by their own rules and requirements. Those transition periods between schools and systems (i.e. between elementary and middle school, middle school and high school, high school and higher education, and community college and university) are unnecessarily complicated. The rules for successfully moving from one stage to the next are often unclear to students and their families; these rules can contain incentives and disincentives for students to achieve success.

## Key Transition Policies Include

- Admissions policies for community college and university, or even specialized middle and high schools. These include admissions tests and essays, application fees, course requirements, and Advanced Placement courses.

- Placement policies that govern who is placed in remedial or advanced classes.

- Transfer policies between community college and a four-year baccalaureate-granting institution.

- Recruitment policies that govern where and how schools and higher education institutions recruit students.

- ENLACE partnerships designed new supportive transition policies and worked to revise policies that acted as barriers for Latino student success.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Design dual enrollment agreements.** These agreements allow high school students to take community college courses. This gives them the opportunity to experience an academically rigorous curriculum while earning college credits. Where dual enrollment agreements are already in place, tutoring and guidance help Latino students access and then succeed in these courses.

**Implement articulation agreements between community colleges and universities.** Transferring from community college – where many Latino students start their higher education career – to a four-year institution is often unnecessarily difficult. Together with the transfer programs described in the previous section, articulation agreements can include guaranteed admission to the local university for community college students, waiving admissions tests for community college students that pass certain requirements, and access to university facilities and academic advising while a student is still in community college.

**Fund equal access to preparation for college admissions tests.** Differential access to courses that prepare students to take the PSAT, the SAT or other admissions tests puts low-income and minority students at a distinct disadvantage. School districts can incorporate equal-access test preparation programs within the school curriculum and financially support all students to take the tests.

**Create joint staff positions between institutions.** Staff that are appointed to both the high school and the local community college, for example, act as brokers of new institutional relationships. They have a unique position to see where students are experiencing barriers in transitioning between the two institutions.

**Engage Latino students, parents, and community leaders in policy and legislative groups.** Bringing the real-life experience of policies to the table provides a critical perspective and urgency to the work of policy analysis and change. As an example, a change in policy that allows students to drop out of high school with only one phone call takes on a new sense of urgency when discussed by the families it most directly affects.

### *(3) Remove financial barriers to accessing and succeeding in college.*

Financial barriers limit educational opportunity for students of all ages, and particularly for those in college. Latinos receive the lowest average amount of financial aid awarded – by type and source of aid – of any ethnic group. One critical challenge is lack of awareness about how to pay for college and the prevalence of myths about financial aid. Citizenship status also prevents many Latino students from receiving federal grants and in-state tuition status for college. The trend away from needs-based financial aid has the potential to increase disparities. ENLACE partnerships addressed the financial barriers through scholarships, analyzing who gets financial aid, and raising awareness of available resources.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Create targeted communication campaigns for Latino students and parents about financial aid policies.** As early as possible in their school careers, incorporate ways to pay for higher education into curricula, college nights, and community events. Spanish-language materials, events that allow parents to ask questions of other informed parents, and media campaigns all reach the broader Latino community.

**Inform Latino college students of their eligibility for grants and scholarships.** More than half of all Latino undergraduate students are enrolled part time, because of family or financial obligations. Concerted efforts to help Latino students find a way, financially, to attend college full time include raising funds, identifying existing scholarships, and counseling Latino high school and college students to apply.

**Research patterns of financial aid for higher education.** Understanding the criteria for receiving financial aid locally, statewide trends, and who is getting access and why is an important step. This analysis informs the debate about the Dream Act, which would provide in-state tuition for postsecondary education to the children of undocumented parents.

## *(4) Ensure equal access to qualified teachers.*

Latino students are twice as likely as white students to reside in central cities of metropolitan areas and thus are more likely to attend schools that are overcrowded and underfunded. These large public high schools have accompanying high student-teacher ratios and Latino youth are more likely to be taught by teachers that are not fully credentialed. In many ENLACE sites, the majority of the P-12 teachers were educated in the local teacher training college or university. By improving teacher training, and attracting more Latinos to the profession, students in the school district will eventually feel the impact.

## Successful Strategies for Communities to Consider

**Provide professional development for teachers to teach more rigorous coursework**. Policies that raise curricular standards for students need corresponding support for teachers to teach to that new level.

**Give financial incentives that encourage Latino students to enter the teaching profession and teach in their own communities.** Policies can provide financial incentives for Latino students to study to become teachers and to teach in their own communities. Connected programs can create peer learning communities and professional support to boost Latino students' success.

## Take Note: Good Principles for Changing Policy

Moving institutions to change how they serve students requires careful planning, realistic expectations, and targeted energy. ENLACE sites succeeded when they demystified how policy change occurs. Policy change is about understanding how institutions work, how the legislature works, and then using those levers for change. The following gives a step-by-step framework for engaging in policy change:

**1) Identify the issue.** Latino students, their families, and their teachers are important sources of information about where to focus energy. These coalitions of advocates can then mobilize for policy change. Together, these coalitions answer: What are key local problems affecting Latino children? If it is middle school academics, they then drill down as much as possible to the specifics, such as proficiency in the English language and writing. What policies act as barriers to Latino student achievement?

What policies, together with services, could act as supports? Who needs to be influenced to make those changes happen? Defining the problem and solution as simply as possible makes the work manageable.

**2) Decide on policy targets and opportunities.** A critical decision point is to determine both what are the important policies that need changing, and what are the policies that one has a chance of changing. Discover, through scanning the political environment and the context, where there are openings for policy change in the system. Institutional leaders play an important role in identifying feasible policy targets. Through their understanding of how their institution works, they can bring to the table an analysis of, for example, the financial aid policies of their college, or the policies around electronic student records for their school district. By bringing this detailed understanding of institutional policies, they channel the energy of the parents and students into addressing barriers that have a chance of being changed.

**3) Influence the policy targets.** High-level decision makers with the clout to make policy change are a key part of the equation. Informing these leaders about barriers and solutions lays the foundation for their support down the road. Analysis of issues such as trends in financial aid, the barriers to admissions or transfer in local institutions, or local high school drop-out rates influences the policy debate. Leaders can embed themselves in school boards and educational reform committees as an important way of spreading the word.

At critical points, communities then leverage their relationships for change. For example, periodically bring Latino students and families – those most affected by policies – to the state legislature to discuss education concerns. This familiarizes key policymakers with the issues and primes them to support solutions down the road. As Miguel Satut, program director for the ENLACE Initiative from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation described, *"You need to have enough of a mix between the passionate advocate and then the person with the title who can actually turn the key."*

**4) Monitor the results of policy change.** Many educational partnerships stop with the adoption of policy or passage of legislation. Experience taught ENLACE partnerships that policy change is not enough. They must go hand in hand with student programs or professional development to have an impact on students. The articulation agreements between the local community colleges and the universities are one example. The agreements themselves are an important accomplishment. However, to take advantage of this policy change, students need advice about transferring and information about financial aid, counselors need professional support to carry out the new policies, and the colleges and the universities need to find ways to share student records. Monitoring the results of the policy change include gauging whether more students successfully transfer and then graduate. The ultimate success of the policy goes beyond its enactment to its impact on student outcomes.

# The Future of the ENLACE Model

The model for increasing the academic success of Latino students described in this publication adds up to challenging but rewarding work. The experience of the ENLACE partnerships shows that progress is possible. Effective strategies come from the commitment and creativity of institutional and community leaders in the 13 communities. They are also due to the willingness of the institutions to explore what is not working, decide to make some changes, and then build momentum.

That momentum can be seen in the funds raised by ENLACE partnerships to sustain activities beyond ENLACE funding from the Kellogg Foundation. More than $75 million was secured by the ENLACE sites since January 2004. Much of that funding came from a federal program, GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness for Undergraduate Programs). Other sources include internal funding from local school districts, state government funds, and grants from local and national foundations. The ENLACE sites with the longest previous history and experience also have the greatest diversity of funding. As newer ENLACE sites gain experience and gather more successes, they too are working toward both diversifying funding sources and increasing internal commitment of resources.

The next phase of ENLACE is to scale up the collaboration and impact in specific states. California, Florida, and New Mexico, each with at least two of the original ENLACE partnerships, have received funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to focus on affecting Latino education at the state and national level. These expanded ENLACE partnerships are replicating specific strategies across their states to reach more students. Family Centers based in local high schools are being adopted by more schools, with state government appropriation of funds. The path to adopting a more rigorous math curriculum for all students is serving as a model for other school districts. By providing hands-on training and site visits for other communities, these statewide partnerships are translating their ENLACE experience to the context of other communities.

At a policy level, the ENLACE partnerships are connecting with local and state legislators to influence curricular policies, teacher training policies, and financial aid requirements. Several states around the country are creating P-20 coalitions to build a seamless transition between school and university, and ENLACE partners are tapping into those movements. At the national level, policymakers and legislators are looking to ENLACE,

as well as federal programs such as TRIO (a federal program to help low-income and disabled Americans enter and graduate from college) and GEAR UP, to provide ideas about what works for Latino students.

To support these policy change efforts at state and national levels and multiply their impact, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is partnering with select national policy groups. These organizations serve as key partners to bring ENLACE successes to scale in other cities and states around the nation. They include:

- The National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) after serving as the primary evaluator for ENLACE, is partnering with the statewide ENLACE initiatives as they increase their scope and impact.

- The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) is developing and implementing specific statewide policy agendas that incorporate ENLACE principles and best practices, in partnership with ENLACE sites. Latino policymakers are empowered to lead the way in their states and around the country.

- The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL) are both working with legislators in states with current ENLACE programs and states with large Latino population growth. Their goals are to raise the awareness of ENLACE programs among the state legislative audience and to design innovative ways that state policy can support the expansion of these programs. Additionally, these organizations are making the connection of ENLACE programs to address the educational issues for other underserved population groups.

Finally, the ENLACE MEXICO initiative is a partnership to improve academic success for students in Mexico, based on learnings from ENLACE's work with Latino students in the United States. This effort is being led by NCCEP – Mexico with an initial pilot program in the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

The common thread through all these collaborations at the state, national, and most recently bi-national levels, is to build upon the lived experiences of the Latino communities through ENLACE. The grassroots-level work continues at ENLACE sites and will inform this next phase of policy to change the educational situation for all Latino students.

# Phase III ENLACE Partners

**The National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP)** has as its mission to develop and strengthen broad-based partnerships throughout the education continuum, from early childhood through postsecondary education. www.edpartnerships.org/

**National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)** is a nonpartisan membership organization whose constituency includes the nation's more than 6,000 Latino officials, both elected and appointed. www.naleo.org/

**The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)** is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation's 50 states, commonwealths, and territories. NCSL provides research, technical assistance, and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on state issues. www.ncsl.org/

**The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL)** is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization representing over 300 elected Hispanic state legislators throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The NHCSL's primary mission is to organize Hispanic state legislators who advocate on behalf of Hispanic communities across the United States. www.nhcsl.com/

**California ENLACE** is a multiyear initiative to strengthen the educational pipeline and increase opportunities for Latinos to enter and complete college. www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/

**ENLACE Florida** is a statewide network to improve college readiness, access, and success in higher education for Latino students and other underrepresented groups. www.usfweb2.usf.edu/enlace/

**ENLACE – New Mexico** is a statewide initiative to create and support a seamless K-16 educational system in New Mexico that is more responsive, accountable, accessible, and supportive of Latino/a students' educational success. The ENLACE collaboratives are made up of K-16 schools, parents, students, business, government officials, and community groups. ENLACE program components across the state include mentoring, tutoring, curriculum development, parent involvement and training, and leadership conferences, among others. www4.unm.edu/enlacenm

# General College Access Resources

**Achieve, Inc.** Created by the nation's governors and business leaders in 1996, Achieve helps states raise academic standards and achievement so that all students graduate ready for college, work and citizenship. www.achieve.org/

**The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)** was created in 1998 during the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to encourage more young people from low-income families to consider and prepare early for college. www.edpartnerships.org/

**The National College Access Network** is dedicated to assisting local communities all over the country to initiate, develop, and sustain their own college access programs. www.collegeaccess.org/NCAN/

**The Pathways to College Network** is a national alliance of organizations committed to using research-based knowledge to improve postsecondary education access and success for the nation's underserved students, including underrepresented minorities, low-income students, those who are the first in their families to go to college, and students with disabilities. www.pathwaystocollege.net/

**The Council for Opportunity in Education** is a nonprofit organization, established in 1981, dedicated to furthering the expansion of educational opportunities throughout the United States. Through its membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies that host TRIO Programs to specifically help low-income Americans enter college and graduate. www.coenet.us/

**National College Access Program Directory**. Developed by Pathways to College Network and National College Access Network, this free online resource provides students, parents, counselors, and researchers with information about college access programs. www.collegeaccess.org/accessprogramdirectory/

**College Readiness for All**, an online toolbox developed by Pathways to College contains Tools, Lessons Learned, and Resources & Links designed to support the collaborative efforts of educators, counselors, outreach professionals, and policymakers. www.pathwaystocollege.net/collegereadiness/toolbox/resources.asp

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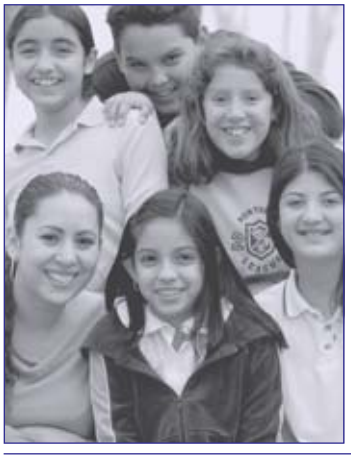
# ENLACE

Supporting All Students to Graduate from School with the Requirements for Entering College:

Learning from the ENLACE Experience



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## Background on the Issue

Research makes it clear that the critical factor in whether a student succeeds in college is the "quality and intensity" of the curriculum he or she takes in high school. For many Latino students, access to a high-quality, rigorous K-12 curriculum is limited. Minority students are often on a less rigorous curriculum track starting early in their schooling. Without even realizing it, many minority students are graduating high school without taking the "gateway" courses (i.e. algebra 2, certain language arts classes, laboratory science classes or foreign language classes) needed for entrance to the university. The consequence? High rates of remediation, longer stays to graduate from college, and lower rates of college graduation.

Many state-level educational leaders around the country understand that this cannot be framed solely as a K-12 issue. Higher education institutions also need to become clearer in defining what constitutes "college readiness." A growing number of states are working through P-16 partnerships to implement a default college-preparatory curriculum in K-12. At the same time, they are clarifying entrance requirements for local colleges and aligning them with the statewide high school graduation requirements.

## The ENLACE Experience

In those states where there was an existing movement to align the local P-16 educational pathway, ENLACE partnerships connected with that movement. The policy changes needed broad policy actors at the local level, school district, and state levels. Key questions that were explored included:

- What are the state curriculum requirements for high school graduation and how do they align with the entrance requirements for the community colleges and universities in the state?
- What level math is required for high school graduation? Does that match the entrance requirements for the colleges and universities in the state?
- What science, English language arts, foreign language, and social studies courses are required for graduation? Do they match the entrance requirements for the colleges and universities in the state?

- What percentage of local students are on the pathway of college preparatory courses starting in middle school?
- What percentage of local students are then graduating high school with the requirements to enter the local colleges and universities?
- What percentage of local students take remedial courses in community colleges and universities?
- What percentage of local students are taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes?

The ENLACE partnerships brought a feeder pathway of schools and community colleges and universities that could pilot test policy changes. As an example, Santa Ana ENLACE identified Algebra as the gateway-to-college course that many students, particularly Latino students, were missing when they graduated from high school. A curriculum change was needed to require that all students get on an algebra course sequence in middle school. Before instituting this district-wide change, they pilot tested algebra in a small number of schools first to determine what supports were needed for success. Grant funding was used to improve teachers' instructional skills so they could effectively teach the higher level math, and students were provided tutoring. As a result, despite widening the pool of students taking Algebra, passing grades rose. Following this pilot test and other curricular reforms, the Santa Ana United School District adopted one of the most rigorous high school graduation requirements in the state of California.

In another example, Northern New Mexico ENLACE contributed to incremental changes to the course curriculum by stimulating increased demand for rigorous classes. Using a nationally known model, AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), Latino students gained study skills and academic skills to succeed in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In response to the increased demand by Latino students, who had never participated in these college-preparatory courses before, the school system began to offer more AP courses and pre-AP courses.

The ENLACE sites learned that while the core issue of curricular standards is academic, the solutions lie in an integrated approach. These include: changing curricular policies, advocating for a default college-prep curriculum, providing student social and academic supports, and empowering parents and families to help their children get on the college track.

## Resources

Student Success: Statewide P-16 Systems. State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) 2003. www.sheeo.org/k16/P16.pdf. This comprehensive report describes the key components of a state-wide educational system, from pre-school through post-secondary education, that supports student success.

State Policy Inventory Database Online. Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the Pathways to College Network. www.wiche.edu/Policy/spido/index.asp. This database provides a state-level inventory of policies and resources related to student achievement, access, and success in higher education.

To learn more about the ENLACE experience of addressing P-20 curricular reform, please contact the following ENLACE partnerships:

New Mexico ENLACE – Albuquerque, New Mexico
www4.unm.edu/enlacenm

Santa Ana ENLACE – Santa Ana, California
www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/

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# ENLACE

What Parents Need to Know to Support Their Child on the Pathway to College:

Learning from the ENLACE Experience

ENLACE

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## Background on the Issue

For U.S. immigrant families, or families that have previously made a living without a college education, the U.S. higher education scene may still be unfamiliar – but not for long. Latino families understand the economic and social benefits of a college degree in today's economy, where workers in all professions need more education, not less.

In fact, Latino parents and students have higher educational aspirations than ever before. In a Pew Hispanic Center survey, nearly all (95 percent) Latino parents said it was "very important" to them that their children go to college.[1] In one study of six U.S. states, over 80 percent of the Latino students surveyed planned to attend some form of postsecondary education.

College enrollment data is beginning to reflect these aspirations: Latinos are the fastest growing college enrollment group in the United States. However, too many Latino students still never get that far. Only 53 percent of Latino students graduate from high schools with the course requirements to enter a four-year institution. Even when they successfully enter college, Latinos are most likely to leave without attaining a degree. Many Latino students are the first in their families to graduate from high school or go on to college. Navigating the complex U.S. educational system is difficult for any family, but particularly challenging when parents have not gone through the process themselves.

ENLACE partnerships determined that parental knowledge and support were key to connecting college aspirations with actual college attainment. Parental motivation and encouragement is not enough; students need useful and accurate information and direction from their parents. So, ENLACE sites designed a host of ways to reach parents with information, all along their child's education pathway. They asked students about their parents' concerns, held parent seminars, trained current college students to visit families with teenagers, and trained parent leaders to be ambassadors of information to other parents. Two especially successful programs are highlighted below.

## ENLACE y Avance (Advance) in Santa Barbara: Family Home Visits

Although most Latino parents dream that their child will go to college, taking the steps to make that happen can be unfamiliar territory for Latino parents. The ENLACE *y Avance* partnership, led by the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), has created an innovative way to reach those parents and students, right in their own homes. A cadre of Latino college juniors and seniors from UCSB and nearby Santa Barbara City

[1] Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation. National survey of Latinos: Education. (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2004), p. 9.

College serve as mentors to families who live in surrounding neighborhoods. These mentors – students willing to learn by performing community service – are invaluable resources to these Latino parents. The mentors get intensive training for their roles, and are closely monitored once they are out in the field. A prime role mentors play is demystifying what it takes to get to college, and providing practical information on how to apply for scholarships and financial aid. Most important, they put the Latino "face" on college and allow parents to see their own children in that role.

## Santa Ana Partnership: Padres Promotores

The *Padres Promotores* program in Santa Ana, California, taps the potential of Latino parent leaders. This model of parent advocacy is built on the community health promoter approach. The parent leaders receive 40 hours of initial training in community advocacy and how the higher education system works, followed by continuous monthly training sessions. They then provide information, support, and training to other parents in schools and neighborhoods.

Parent promoters literally go door to door to inform families, answering: How does financial aid work? What courses do my children need to take to get into college? What is the SAT? As one parent promoter described, "*Learning how to help our children succeed in school means so much more coming from a fellow parent than from an administrator… At times I would stay for hours because parents had so many questions and concerns.*" Community talks (or pláticas) reach many families and community groups at once with the valuable information. Over the course of one year, 36 promotores conducted almost 1,600 home visits and over 500 community pláticas.

## Information Parents Need to Support Their Child on the Pathway to College

- Where to find local sources for college-going reading material, counseling, and preparation
- What middle school classes set their child on the right course for high school
- What high school courses (year by year, class by class) are required for college admission
- How to direct their children into these appropriate high school courses
- Which degrees translate into which jobs
- How to develop effective communication with teachers and schools
- How to instill a desire for a college education and make it the only possible option

- How to help their child prepare for and take college entrance exams
- How to gather information on options, from local community colleges to four-year universities
- Ways to familiarize the family with various local college campuses and the resources they offer
- How to search for scholarships
- How to apply for financial aid
- How to apply to community colleges and universities
- How to help their child prepare for the transition to college
- How and when to transfer from the community college to university

For more research and good practices on parent support for college-going children, please see:

Padre a Padre curriculum developed by The Santa Ana Partnership's Padres Promotores de la Educacion
www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/sapartnership/Promotores/Padre%20a%20Padre%20curriculum.pdf

Education in the United States: A Parent Primer (English and Spanish versions available), produced by ENLACE, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004
www.wkkf.org/DesktopModules/WKF.00_DmaSupport/ViewDoc.aspx?LanguageID=0&CID=16&ListID=28&ItemID=163378&fld=PDFFile

Spanish language video novellas: These two Spanish-language videos address college-access issues faced by Latinos. Produced by Oxnard College – part of the ENLACE y Avance partnership led by the University of California at Santa Barbara, 2004
www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=101&CID=16&CatID=16&ItemID=33795&NID=20&LanguageID=0

PALMS (Postsecondary Access for Latino Middle-Grades Students) Parent Outreach Study, launched in September 2004, examines how college access programs across the country work to address the gap in Latino college-going aspirations and actual attainment. www.palmsproject.net/reach/ A number of ENLACE programs are cited as examples.

To learn about the experience of building parent support for college-going, please contact the following ENLACE sites:
Albuquerque, NM www.unm.edu/~enlace/;
Santa Ana, CA www.sac.edu/community/parternships/enlace/;
Santa Barbara, CA research.ucslo.edu/ccs/enlace

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# ENLACE

## Bridging the Gap Between Community College and University:

## Learning from the ENLACE Experience

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## Background on the Issue

In the United States, nearly half of all undergraduate students start their higher education at a community college. For the Latino population, that number jumps to over 60 percent.[1] Over half of all undergraduate Latino students spend some part of the academic year as part-time students, while also tending to family and work responsibilities. For these students, a community college education opens many doors, including the door to transfer to a four-year, degree-granting university.

In reality, however, less than 13 percent of Latino students who begin at a community college actually complete a bachelor's degree. Overall, by age 26, only 18 percent of Latino high school graduates have attained a bachelor's degree. The research and experience is clear. Entrance into college is only one hurdle; having a successful experience that ends in graduating with a degree is just as critical.

Many ENLACE sites realized that, to have an impact on the numbers of Latino students successfully attaining bachelor's degrees, they needed to bridge the transition between community college and university. Financial barriers are paramount and addressing these required commitment on the part of the institutions. Partnerships between the university and the community colleges that feed into it were key, together with community organizations that served the Latino community.

The ENLACE model has made a difference in the lives of Latino students by using a holistic approach: implementing student-centered programs, engaging parents and the community, and changing institutional and state policies. These three core elements were also vital in bridging the gap between community college and university. The following are good practices that emerged through the ENLACE experience, and are also borne out through research.

## Good Practices for Supporting Latino Student Transfer from Community College to University

***Serve students across the P-20 educational pathway***

Begin preparation for community college to university transfer during high school for students unlikely to immediately enter university due to academic, financial, or residency challenges. This includes advice about course credits and financial aid, as well as developing a long-term plan of study.

[1] Latino Youth Finishing College: The Role of Selective Pathways. Pew Hispanic Center. Fry, June 2004.

Create peer-learning communities in the first year of community college. Bilingual peer communities for first-year Latino students can provide critical peer support for a successful journey into a university.

Create case-based follow-up, counseling, and advising transfer programs in the community colleges that engage a broad group of college staff. Transfer counselors that forge a personal connection with students can include faculty members, student peer advisors, as well as specific transfer "agents." At universities, create specialized orientation programs for transfer students.

Develop summer bridge programs for community college students to experience university courses and begin to immerse themselves in university life.

Engage master's-level Latino students in the field of educational administration in the issue of community college transfer through fellowship programs.

***Engage parents, families, and communities***

Include parents and family members in orientations, counseling, and advising of community college students. Latino community college students are far more likely to be living with family, and have family and work obligations. Bringing family into the college experience is critical, particularly for students who are first-generation college-students.

Support networks of Latino parents with children in college or university to speak at orientations and to engage with other Latino parents. They can demystify the university experience, applications, and, particularly, financial aid mechanisms.

***Support policy change for impact***

Address the urgent financial aid situation that limits community college students from going on to get bachelor's degrees. Create endowed scholarships for transfers, identify and resolve inequities in institutional aid for transfer students, and provide emergency funds to support students in need.

Build personal and institutional relationships at the community colleges and the universities within the community's feeder pattern. Faculty, counselors, and administrators at both institutions can collaborate on pedagogy, curriculum development, and placement exams.

Create articulation agreements and dual enrollment agreements between community colleges and partner universities. These can include guaranteed admission to the local university for community college students, waiving admissions tests for students that pass certain requirements, and access to university facilities and advising while still in community college.

For more research and good practices to support this transfer, please see:

www.jackkentcookefoundation.org/. Transfer Access to Elite Colleges and Universities in the United States: Threading the Needle of the American Dream. Dowd, A. et . al. Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. 2006.

www.highereducation.org/reports/pa_transfers/. State Policy and Community College-Baccalaureate Transfer. Wellman, J. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Institute for Higher Education Policy. 2004.

To learn about the experience of improving this transfer, please contact the following ENLACE sites:

Northeastern Illinois University – Chicago, Illinois
www.neiu.edu/~enlace/

Santa Ana College – Santa Ana, California
www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/

Hillsborough Community College – Tampa, Florida
www.hccfl.edu/enlace/

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# ENLACE

Creating College-Focused Centers in the Schools:

Learning from the ENLACE Experience

ENLACE

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## Background on the Issue

Students in the United States have higher educational aspirations than ever before. Eighty-eight percent of America's 8th graders expect to participate in some form of postsecondary education, and these numbers cut across ethnic and racial lines. Yet, by the time Latino students graduate from high school, many are not academically prepared for college. Lack of rigorous coursework and placement in a non-college preparatory curricular track as early as middle school are the primary barriers to college entrance.

An additional barrier, however, are the myths, misconceptions, and absence of accurate information about what it takes to get to college. This issue is particularly critical for students who are the first in their families who have the opportunity to go to college. Course requirements for college admissions, the required admissions tests, and the intricacies of applying for financial aid are some of the areas that students and their families are expected to understand.

## ENLACE Experiences

To fill these gaps, several ENLACE sites created college-focused centers in local high schools. The centers are staffed by a mix of high school guidance counselors, staff from community colleges and universities, high school teachers, and college student interns and mentors. Activities include one-on-one counseling, financial aid workshops, events for parents, test preparation tutoring, and self-directed research about colleges.

Working through their partnerships, these ENLACE sites creatively channeled resources toward the centers. For example, local community college staff held joint positions at the high schools to support the centers, while college-age mentors worked with high school students to help them complete college application forms.

The centers served as a nexus that brought information about higher education into one place. Outside institutions knew where to bring their information, and high school students, teachers, and parents knew where to get information and support. Symbolically, having a physical location signaled the importance of higher education and became a key part of creating a college-going culture in the schools.

## Good Practices for College-Focused Centers in the Schools

***Serve students across the P-20 educational pathway***

Develop a mentorship or internship program with local community college or university students to support the college-focused center. With proper training in both how to work with younger students, and in the intricacies of the college application and financial aid process, these mentors can be a valuable asset to a college-focused center. Paying stipends to the college mentors both formalizes their work, and allows for lower-income college students to participate. Having mentors with backgrounds similar to the students they work with can provide an added richness to the relationship.

Offer internships to high school students to work in their own college-focused centers. This supports ownership and buy-in to the center from the students they serve.

Create a college-focused center not only in the high school, but even in the middle school. Particularly for first-generation students, there needs to be early reinforcement that they have the opportunity and potential to go to college, and the preparation to support that goal.

Integrate activities of a college-focused center into the academic and daily life of the school. Engaging teachers in the centers, and helping them incorporate college into their academic curriculum brings the centers' work into the heart of the school.

Closely evaluate the impact of the college-focused centers. The college application and attendance rates for local high school students should be tracked at the school district level and connected to center activities. As one of the ENLACE partners at a college-focused center stated, "*If we don't start to see an increase in the numbers of our students going off to college … we have to ask ourselves, 'What's going to shake things up?'*"

***Engage parents, families, and communities***

Open the college-focused centers to family members of the students. Staying open late and opening periodically on weekends for specific workshops and events can bring family members into the process. Food, child care, transportation support, etc., can create a welcoming atmosphere for families.

Develop a steering committee to support the college-focused centers. Besides school staff, invite family members, students, and community members, including nonprofit leaders and business leaders to participate.

***Support policy change for impact***

Connect with existing local educational reform movements to channel resources toward a college-focused center in the high school. The case can be made that college centers at high schools contribute to improved academic standards, advance the diversity goals of local universities, and encourage greater higher education involvement with secondary schools.

Engage staff from local higher education institutions in the centers. Informal connections can be formalized and deepened through institutional policy support that allows community college or university staff time to spend more time working with local high schools.

Explore policy opportunities at local higher education institutions that could result in waived fees for college applications, college entrance exams, college preparatory classes, etc.

For more research and good practices for developing a college-focused center, please see:

www.collegeaccess.org/NCAN/ The National College Access Network website provides information about college access programs around the country.

www.pathwaystocollege.net/collegereadiness/toolbox/index.asp The College Readiness for All Toolbox provides resources to support the efforts of educators, counselors, outreach professionals, and policymakers.

To learn about the experience of developing a college-going center, please contact the following ENLACE sites:

New Mexico State University – Las Cruces, New Mexico
http://www.nmsu.edu/~senlace

Santa Ana College – Santa Ana, California
www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/

Texas St. Edward's University – Austin, Texas
www.idra.org/enlace/stedwards

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